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Book Reviews.

The Historical Geography of the Holy Land, especially in relation to the History of Israel and of the Early Church. By GEORGE ADAM SMITH, D.D. With six maps. Second edition. New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1895. Pp. xxv., 692. Price, \$4.50.

This is a unique book. Dean Stanley's *Sinai and Palestine* was an essay in the same direction, but only fragmentary and tentative. This book fills its place and much more besides. Geography is an indispensable aid to history. Events happened, men lived — somewhere. That "somewhere" had much to do with the outcome of the events, the life of the men. The purpose of this book is to bring the event and the place, the man and his environment, together, and to show how much and what manner of illumination the one can give to the other. Such a service in the case of the Sacred History is especially valuable and necessary, (1) because of the veil of unreality which hangs around the biblical characters, often making them spectres in a spiritual sphere with no relation to ordinary humanity except that mediated by a symbolic or spiritualizing interpretation, and (2) because of the remarkable geography of the Holy Land and the exceedingly intimate relation it had to the people who lived and died in that land. The whole is made more real and more true — in being made more human, it becomes at the same time more helpful — by resetting it in the frame of earthly circumstance and scene, separation from which was loss of a part of itself. (3) The supreme interest of the Bible, centering, as it does, upon Jesus Christ, makes desirable and indispensable to the student every means of coming into closer touch with him. To know intimately the country where he lived, to dwell by imagination in the scenes where he dwelt, to follow him on the pathways he walked, is to draw nearer to him, to understand him better and thus to gain a new power of imitating and obeying him.

The author has peculiar gifts and preparation for this task. He has insight and imagination, indispensable for reuniting the scattered elements of a past life, ample and careful learning, fortified by two visits to the Holy Land in 1880 and 1891, reverence for the sacred history, and a vivid and vigorous style which makes the old scenes live again in their original vitality.

It will be not unprofitable to give an outline of the structure and general contents of the ample volume. It is divided into three "Books." Book I. deals with "the land as a whole," under six chapters. Ch. 1, "Syria's place in the world's history," which is conditioned by four factors, (1) her relation to Arabia, (2) her position as debatable ground between Asia and Africa, (3) her influence westward, (4) her religion. Ch. 2, "the form of the land and its historical consequences" marks off the land into its seven great regions from west to east, (1) the maritime plain, (2) the low hills or Shepheleh,

(3) the central range, cut in two by (4) Esdraelon, and running out into (5) the Negeb, (6) the Jordan valley, (7) the eastern range. This division emphasizes the distinction between mountain and plain as determining history, on which account Palestine was destined to be a land of tribes not the seat of one great unified government. Ch. 3, "climate and fertility," presents the influence of the "ample" temperature, the sudden changes as making men hardy, the whole lending itself to the service of moral ideas; the effect of the marvelous fertility upon the Bedouin immigrant in occasioning (*a*) an ascent in civilization, but (*b*) a fall in religion. Ch. 4, "the scenery and its reflection in Old Testament poetry" is full of brilliant pictures of the sights and scenes of the land as they are reflected in the war songs, the prophetic messages, the Song of Solomon and the Psalms. Ch. 5, "the land and questions of faith" bids us not expect too much of this geographical illustration of the Bible. It is subsidiary. Its help is positive when it seems to be negative, *e. g.*, it removes the possibility of chance from this history, and it leads us, by its own inability to explain the facts, to seek the higher explanation. Its use is seen in the development of true faith in the incarnation, in that it enables us (*a*) to realize the preparation for Christ's coming, and (*b*) to grasp him as a man and a man of his time. Ch. 6 places the reader on Mt. Ebal, from there to gain in one bird's-eye view a comprehensive knowledge of the geographical situation of Palestine.

Books II. and III. go into details which Book I. has marked out, the former describing western Palestine, the latter, Palestine east of the Jordan. It is not necessary to state the various details of these "Books." They show an unexampled vividness of conception and expression which makes everything stand out before the mind. You seem to see the great roads of Galilee thronged with travelers from east and west, the bustling life about Nazareth, the jungle bed of Jordan with its lions, the opulence coupled with insecurity of Eastern Palestine, the brilliant civilization of the Decapolis, the black basalt villages of the Hauran, the glowing fertility of the Damascus plain, and a dozen other equally charming bits of color that adorn these pages. There is the warm sympathy of the writer with all the varied phases of this life. He sees into the moral meaning and historical issues of a landscape or a mountain range, and what were once dry facts and figures are given a permanent intellectual and spiritual interest. A marvelous faculty of generalization gathers from a fact or bundle of scattered notices—an epitaph, a ruined building, or a flowing stream—fruitful historic principles which work out into details of wide application. Almost every page has a quotable passage; every chapter has much that is permanently valuable. It is a commentary on the Bible of unequalled richness and beauty. No student of the Bible can afford to be without it, and no student of the Bible will find it anything but delightful reading.

The book has the defects of its qualities, as is the case with every great book. The easy style of the author has led him into some diffuseness.

Repetitions are not infrequent, in some cases doubtless required by the plan of the work. But we think that it might have been condensed by one-tenth without injury. It is also a question whether the author has not been sometimes over brilliant. It seems ungracious, perhaps, to say that the color has sometimes been laid on too thickly, the generalizations sometimes made from too few facts, the modern spirit projected too far into the ancient world, making it respond to what is modern motive. Let us illustrate. "The rôle of the Semitic race has been intermediary" (p. 5). This may be true of the Syrian Semites, but does it apply to those of Assyria and Babylonia? Has not the Semite been the producer of an original civilization? The Semites are those through whom have come to the world "its only universal religions" (p. 6). But has not Buddhism as rightful a claim to universality as Judaism or Islam? Again, "to the prophets Phœnicia and her influence are a great and a sacred thing Isaiah and Ezekiel bewail the destruction of Tyre and her navies as desecration" (p. 28). This conclusion can hardly be drawn from the prophetic passages referred to. Their attitude seems rather one of condemnation. The conception of Israel's decline in religion on entering the promised land (pp. 89-90) ought to be counterbalanced by the consideration that the bold and rude tribal religion of the Bedouin was really enriched by contact with Canaanite naturalism. It was a seeming decline, but a real advance. Judea (p. 323) is compared with Northern Israel, to the depreciation of the latter in moral and religious elements. But is sufficient weight given to the variety and fulness of the religious life of the latter?

We add some further criticisms on points of detail. The author defends vigorously the representation in the Book of Joshua of the passage of the Jordan by all the tribes under Joshua. He does not seem to us to give due weight to what appears to be the differing representation in Judges ch. 1, or to offer any adequate explanation of why Judah should have left the united host at Jericho, or later. The second edition shows the influence of W. M. Müller's important work on "Asia and Europe in the Light of Egyptian Monuments," but nothing like justice is done to Müller's conclusions respecting the Philistines. Smith's chapter needs a thorough reconstruction in view of those conclusions. The note on page 197 is quite inadequate. The note about the river Litany on p. 415 is correct, and we are, therefore, surprised to see the incorrect "Leontes" appearing on the large map I.

However, our criticisms are few and may be thought chiefly to represent personal preferences, called out by a book so wide in its scope and so fruitful in its suggestions. No one can read it without constant admiration and constant benefit. Both admiration and benefit increase the longer the book is studied. It is a permanent contribution to biblical knowledge of the very highest kind.

G. S. G.